

EDITORIAL

Nomenclature is a precise and essential element of communication among biologists. Systematic, floristic, and ecological botanists, including the majority of authors who publish in *Madroño* and most of the members of the California Botanical Society, are particularly dependent upon nomenclature to convey the results of their research to fellow botanists and other interested persons. Thus, it is important that scientific names are used without introducing unnecessary ambiguity or inaccuracy.

A few years ago two compilers, J. T. and R. Kartesz, with the help of many specialists, produced a synonymized checklist of the vascular plants of much of North America (A synonymized checklist of the vascular flora of the United States, Canada and Greenland, Vol. II, *The biota of North America*, Univ. North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1980). Other checklists of plants for portions of North America also have been published with synonyms (e.g., U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service, National list of scientific names, Vol. 1, List of names; Vol. 2, Synonymy, SCS-TP-159, 1982). We believe these checklists are commendable efforts to incorporate the large amount of current botanical nomenclature into convenient references for much of North America. During the six years since its publication, however, the volume by Kartesz and Kartesz has been used to standardize nomenclature in publications and reports. It has been used even to organize herbaria. This checklist generally includes current nomenclature and corresponding synonyms for taxa recognized by participating researchers; but it also contains many errors and ambiguous applications of names, rendering it an unacceptable resource for these important uses.

Because of such errors and ambiguities, we are alarmed by the casual acceptance and citation of Kartesz and Kartesz or other recent checklists as the primary sources of nomenclature and taxonomic treatments in some of the manuscripts submitted to *Madroño*. In this regard, we are in agreement with many reviewers who have expressed concern about manuscripts in which the authors rely solely on synonymized checklists for nomenclature. A principal concern is the unavoidable transmission of errors; another is the use of plant names not present in regional floras or manuals. We see no reason to encourage a perpetuation of misapplied names or other errors from either recent checklists or regional works. We also think that because many of our members are not taxonomists and may not have synonymized checklists or convenient access to recent treatments, the use of nomenclature from checklists, without reference to synonyms present in widely-used regional manuals, can detract from the information provided by authors.

We suggest, therefore, that contributors to *Madroño* attempt to achieve a satisfactory compromise by 1) citing only widely-used regional references as their basic source of nomenclature, 2) providing current nomenclature and corrections when necessary or desirable, and 3) including appropriate synonyms from regional works for the substitutions. As new or anticipated manuals or floras are published, the need to incorporate changes from recent contributions will be reduced. Because taxonomy is not a static science, however, and because nomenclature will continue to require refinement, no single reference will ever be sufficient for all plants. Thus, each of us should strive to achieve the best method to communicate to our colleagues with a minimum of ambiguity. We anticipate that members of our Society and other readers of *Madroño* will be most appreciative and that scientific communication will be enhanced. W.R.F. and J.R.H.